

A Model of Media Attendance Perspective on Online Fitness Community Use

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Objective

People are increasingly logging and sharing their physical activities on dedicated social media platforms or 'Online Fitness Communities' (OFCs). A popular example of these OFCs is Strava, predominantly used by cyclists and runners. The aim of this study was to identify drivers and determinants of Strava use from a Model of Media Attendance (MMA) perspective.

Method

A quantitative online survey was distributed on the profile pages of 3400 random Strava users. No geographical limitations were imposed. A comment with a link to the online survey was posted under their last uploaded activity. The survey contained a measurable version of the MMA. MMA represents an integration of both Social Cognitive Theory and Uses & Gratification (U&G). It integrates the social cognitive constructs Self-Efficacy, Expected Outcomes (analogous to U&G), Self-Regulation in a causal framework with inclusion of habitual behavior and use experience.

Results

434 Strava users completed the survey (13%). The model obtained excellent fit ($\chi^2(7)=8.33$, $p<0.304$; CFI=0.99, TLI=0.99, RMSEA=0.02) and explains 30% of the variance in Strava use. Self-Regulation, Expected Outcomes and Habit have a significant direct effect on Strava use. No such direct effect was found for Self-Efficacy, though effects of Self-Efficacy were mediated through Self-Regulation, Expected Outcomes and Habit. Experience with Strava had a small but significant effect on Self-Efficacy and Strava Use. Habit is also strongly influenced by Expected Outcomes and has a significant effect on Self-Regulation.

Conclusions

Results indicate MMA as a valuable framework for studying drivers and determinants of OFC use. Expected outcomes, a construct consisting of Novel Outcomes and Social Outcomes, appear most influential for Strava use, which implies that staying up to date on the physical activities of Strava friends and getting support and connecting to other athletes are essential in OFC use. The significant positive influence of habitual behavior on Strava use illustrates that once the user has absorbed or 'domesticated' OFC use into his/her exercise routines this might be a prerequisite for continuous OFC use. This study is limited to Strava users however. Further application of MMA to other OFCs is needed to determine its applicability for varying OFCs user types.